

**OCASI Fall 2010 Professional Development Conference  
Nov 3-5, 2010, Nottawasage Inn, Alliston, Ontario**

**Summary Report and Evaluation**

**Introduction**

The OCASI Fall 2010 Professional Development (PD) Conference took place on November 3-5, 2010, at the Nottawasage Inn Resort, Alliston, Ontario.

**1. Objectives**

The objectives of each of the Professional Development Conferences include:

- To enhance the professional competency and skills level of approximately 300 immigrant and refugee service workers, including front-line staff and managers.
- To facilitate the networking and sharing of information, innovative approaches and expertise among new and experienced workers
- Build relationships among professional colleagues to enhance referral and bridging functions
- Identify and prepare for emerging trends in the settlement service field
- Develop and enhance supportive regional networks among settlement service providers
- To offer a forum for discussion and consensus building on issues related to the development, professionalization and accountability of the settlement sector.

**2. Summary of Conference Program**

The Professional Development Conference program consisted of one opening plenary and keynote speech, 37 3-hours workshops –some of them repeated twice- , 9 showcases of new initiatives and/or information sessions and 7 drop-in information sessions. It also offered networking opportunities, a Resources Display room, entertainment, and social/recreational activities.

A total of 66 trainers were engaged to deliver training and information sessions. Trainers were consultants, academics and representatives from immigrant settlement organizations, other relevant non-profit organizations as well as government.

17 French-speaking participants attended the conference, from 13 francophone or bilingual organizations.

The opening plenary as well as other 7 workshops and information session were presented in French or with simultaneous interpretation in French & English.

For a complete program please visit **[www.ocasi.org/conference](http://www.ocasi.org/conference)** and look for *Fall 2010 Program Package*. A tag at the top of the main Conference page will allow you to obtain the Program in the French language.

**3. Participants' Profile**

A total of 354 participants representing 140 immigrant service organizations attended the Professional Development Conference, including frontline staff from OCASI members and other ISAP funded agencies as well as workshop facilitators and other speakers.

Seventy three per cent indicated that they were front-line workers, 19% indicated that they were program coordinators or managers and 8 % indicated other positions.

Asked how many times they have previously attended the OCASI Professional Development Conference, 53% indicated that this was their first time while 47% indicated that they attended 2 or more times.

#### 4. Evaluation

Participants completed a PD Conference Evaluation Form at the end of the Conference. The Evaluation Form was also accessible online. All participants received the link for the Online Evaluation form. Several participants completed this form online after the Conference.

Participants also completed an Evaluation Form for each workshop and information session. Contact Paulina Maciulis, Conference Coordinator at [pmaciulis@ocasi.org](mailto:pmaciulis@ocasi.org) for results of evaluation of individual workshops.

The following is a summary of the information collected from the PD Conference Evaluation Forms.

##### Rating quality of the activities

Participants were asked to rate the quality of the activities. See below for the results:

<b>Please rate the quality of the following activities/ Veuillez évaluer les suivants</b>	<b>Excellent/ Excellent</b>	<b>Good/ Bon</b>	<b>Needs Improvement/ Besoin d'améliorer</b>	<b>N/A</b>
How do you rate the conference?/ Comment évaluez-vous ce colloque?	<b>58.8%</b>	33.8%	7.5%	0.0%
Pre-conference communication/ La communication d'avant-colloque	<b>70.5%</b>	25.6%	2.6%	1.3%
Online registration/ L'inscription en ligne	<b>76.3%</b>	21.3%	0.0%	2.5%
Schedule of events/ Ordre du jour des événements	<b>57.7%</b>	37.2%	5.1%	0.0%
Conference materials/ Les matériels du Colloque	<b>57.5%</b>	36.3%	6.3%	0.0%
Nottawasaga Inn Resort facilities/ Les équipements de Nottawasaga Inn Resort	<b>45.0%</b>	42.5%	11.3%	1.3%
Meals & snacks/ Repas et collations	<b>49.4%</b>	34.2%	16.5%	0.0%
AGM & Opening Plenary/ Séance plénière d'ouverture & AGA	31.2%	<b>45.5%</b>	7.8%	15.6%
"Meet & Mingle" Reception/ Réception "Rencontrez du monde"	27.3%	<b>39.0%</b>	1.3%	32.5%
Entertainment (Thur. Nov 4 7:30 8:30 PM) / Divertissement (Jeudi 4 nov., 19h30 - 20h30):	<b>40.8%</b>	28.9%	7.9%	22.4%
Entertainment: DJ and Dance/ Divertissement: DJ et Danse	<b>41.3%</b>	30.7%	1.3%	26.7%

Asked about the best features of the Conference, participants highlighted the workshops and information session as well as the networking opportunities. Many of them also praised the entertainment part, including the films, theatre play and dance, as well as some of the features of the hotel.

A summary of participants' comments include the following:

- **Networking / Sharing of Information**

Participants highlighted the importance of networking, the great atmosphere and the camaraderie that were established. They indicated that meeting other settlement workers in person improves the success of the referral process and partnership activities.

- **Logistics and Scheduling**

Participants commended all the aspects of the pre-Conference communications, the online registration system and the support provided by OCASI staff. They also praised the Conference transportation, the onsite registration process and the continuous assistance available from OCASI staff and volunteers.

### **Recommendations**

- Single occupancy at the hotel
- Improved meals – better labeling of ingredients for desert, more rice, better/more sources of protein for vegetarians
- Change hotel
- No evening workshops or information sessions, longer breaks
- Access to hotel check-in as soon as participants arrive at the hotel
- Improve availability and reliability of audiovisual and technical equipment

- **Workshops and Information Sessions**

Most of the participants indicated that there were excellent workshop topics to choose from, very relevant to their needs and facilitated by excellent presenters; they were pleased with the opportunity to exchange best practices and get updates in the sector and highlighted that there were lots of new topics for settlement counselors. Several participants commented that many sessions were very informative and that lots of up-to-date information was received. Many expressed that the best workshops were those with small group interactions.

In spite of the late evening hours, the Drop-In sessions were very well attended and evaluated. The *Working with Karen Refugees* session was attended by 35 participants from many regions of the province. They indicated their interest of continuing their interaction in the future to share information, resources and practices.

Several participants indicated their frustration because they registered for the Human Mobility: New Immigrant Settlement Paradigm workshop and the facilitator did not come. Unfortunately neither the OCASI staff nor the hotel were informed on time.

### **Recommendations:**

The following workshops were underscored as the best ones in enhancing participants' skills and knowledge, and providing important and timely information. Participants recommended that these sessions be repeated at future conferences.

*Quality Assurance, Program Evaluation and Performance Coaching*, facilitated by Faed Hendry, Manager of Training and Outreach with Findhelp Information Services in Toronto

*Overview and Updates of Canada's Immigration Programs and Sponsorship Breakdown: What you Need to Know*, both sessions facilitated by Loly Rico, Co-director of FCJ Refugee Centre. Participants pointed out that refugee-related sessions are unique and different from sessions offered at other conferences.

*Financial Literacy*, facilitated by Daniel Chometa, Community Outreach Manager for Consolidated Credit Counseling Services of Canada.

*Managing Conflict with Angry Clients: Foundational Skills for Front-line Staff*, facilitated by St. Stephen's Conflict Resolution Service.

*Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA): Role at the Port of Entry*, facilitated by Khalida Jelani and Ana Fedel, both of them Senior Officers Trade Compliance at Canada Border Services Agency.

*Understanding Employment Ontario Employment Services and Are you Competing or Just Complying?*, both session facilitated by Sarah Delicate. Sarah has been one of the best evaluated facilitator in this and other OCASI conferences in 2009 and 2010.

*Cross Cultural Counselling: Competencies and Practice*, facilitated by Deborah G. Headley of Network for Therapeutic Alliance.

Participants also recommended the following topics for future professional development conferences:

#### **Settlement Service Delivery**

- More workshops focusing on modernization of settlement services and new/creative ways of delivering these services. Workshop should be facilitated by CIC people
- Information and Referrals
- Communication skills for working with clients: multicultural awareness, attitudes, manners
- Translations and interpretations guides, norms
- Case management
- Mental Health needs assessment procedures

#### **Employment**

- Pre-employment, employment support
- Bridging settlement and employment
- Mentorship, coaching for skills workers, accreditation assessment of internationally educated professionals

#### **Working with specific groups**

- Engaging newcomers
- Youth strategies. Facilitating skills in Youth services
- Providing services to the minority groups within the minority group of immigrants, per example: seniors, disabled, illiterate, inmates, etc.
- Topics that enhance skills and knowledge in serving seniors, women, abused women, refugees

#### **Self-care for settlement workers**

- Self-care and relaxations techniques.
- Workshops on problem solving related to clients and work load, self-care, fitness. How to keep yourself strong, positive and motivated as a service provider, working within the non-profit /social sector

#### **Sectoral information**

- More sectoral information and "breaking news" - Analysis of trends etc.
- Using social media

#### **Other recommendations in areas related to facilitators and Conference logistics:**

The following comments were offered by several participants. OCASI will take into consideration these recommendations in future PD Conferences.

- Address the professional development and networking needs of managers and coordinators, more topics to choose from
- Managers should have their own PD Conference
- Offer all workshops at least twice
- Encourage the facilitators to provide updated information and resources from various community service providers, not only their organization
- Do away with workshops which are heavily theoretical. Use actual experiences of newcomers as basis for research and studies
- Some workshops would create great discussions/questions among the group but time would be an issue
- Selection of workshop facilitators should be more careful (No details provided that would allow OCASI to follow-up)
- We should have more guest speakers
- The audio visual equipment needs improvements. Screens were too small for workshops rooms. Technical problems were distracting.

### **Other comments**

The following remarks summarize participants' additional observations re: the OCASI Fall 2010 PD Conference:

- *The presentation by the Karen Community was great. The group is full of energy and enthusiasm that motivate the entire community. The presentation about SWAVE, was very professional, and good dynamics. Great addition to OCASI.. The group of MT Space was marvelous, is what so many immigrants face every day. I love it!, and the last one, the dancing on Thursday night was very entertaining.*
- *Most of the workshops were great. I think OCASI staff was very professional, kind, and helpful. Meeting so many people that work with settlement issues was wonderful. The "MTSpace" performance was great.*
- *Thank-you to all OCASI staff and volunteers who made this event successful and memorable.*
- *Very well organized and structured*
- *OCASI Conference offers an excellent opportunity to learn and network! Thanks for the excellent coordination.*
- *This was the first conference for me and I think you did a great job because in the end of the day I left with new tools and great impression.*